

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 25, 2005

Honorable Alberto Gonzales
Attorney General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Gonzales:

We are writing to express our deep concern over recent reports in the New York Times and the Washington Post indicating that the Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics ("BJS"), Lawrence A. Greenfeld, was demoted for insisting that data on aggressive police treatment of blacks and Hispanics be included in a press release announcing the results of a racial profiling and traffic stop study. We ask that you immediately reinstate Lawrence A. Greenfeld as the director of BJS and refer this matter to the Inspector General for a thorough investigation.

We are particularly troubled by reports that senior political officials at the Department of Justice ("DOJ") sought to include conclusions in a proposed press release relating to data showing that black and Hispanic drivers were equally likely to be stopped by the police as were white drivers, while eliminating any discussion of data showing that, once stopped, police officers acted in a more aggressive manner toward black and Hispanic drivers. Mr. Greenfeld apparently sought to include both pieces of relevant information in the press release. Failure to do so would have led to an incomplete and inaccurate description of the results of this critical study.

President Bush called for an end to racial profiling in 2001, and we have introduced comprehensive legislation in the United States Congress to achieve that goal. We strongly support the President's call for an end to racial profiling and applaud DOJ for undertaking this study on racial profiling and traffic stops. We are eager to work with you to achieve the President's goal, but we are troubled by the message that this episode sends about the Department's commitment to it.

As you know, racial profiling is a crucial issue for all Americans. When this kind of bias finds a home in the enforcement of the very laws meant to protect us and bind us together, it literally rips our communities apart. While the vast majority of law enforcement officers discharge their duties without bias, it is unacceptable for even one police officer to fail in this regard. The reliance by some law enforcement agents on race, ethnicity, national origin or religion in deciding who to target for criminal investigations violates our nation's

basic constitutional commitment to equal justice under the law. As such, we need to be vigilant in our efforts to end racial profiling.

Although whites, blacks, and Hispanics were stopped by the police at the same rate, the BJS study revealed deep racial disparities in the treatment of black and Hispanic drivers following the initial stop. The study indicated that blacks and Hispanics were much more likely to be arrested than whites, Hispanics were much more likely to be ticketed than blacks or whites, blacks and Hispanics were much more likely to report the use or threatened use of force by a police officer, blacks and Hispanics were much more likely to be handcuffed than whites, and blacks and Hispanics were much more likely to have their vehicles searched than whites.

It is essential that DOJ be forthcoming about these troubling statistics. We strongly believe that such data collection and analysis is the only means through which we can understand and confront the insidious problem of racial profiling. Transparent and accurate statistics also represent the only means through which we can judge our progress in our continuing effort to end racial profiling.

The integrity and independence of statistical studies that inform the drafting and enforcement of our nation's laws cannot be overstated. While individuals may disagree about particular interpretations of a statistical study, there can be no doubt that all of the data and all of the statistical conclusions must be completely transparent. It is likewise essential that all data and statistical conclusions be free from political manipulation. As such, BJS must maintain a level of independence and integrity beyond that found in most other sections of DOJ.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Again, we request that you immediately reinstate Lawrence A. Greenfeld as the director of BJS and refer this matter to the Inspector General for investigation.

Sincerely,

Therese Feingold

John Conyers Jr.

Jerrold Grobler

Justice

Barack Obama

John Scott